

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /026 W

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R 170920Z DEC 74

FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6788

INFO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

C O N F I D E N T I A L TOKYO 16406

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, JA, XF, SA

SUBJECT: MIKI GOVERNMENT AND MIDDLE EAST POLICY

1. GOJ POLICY TOWARD MIDDLE EAST UNLIKELY TO CHANGE MUCH IN NEAR TERM, MID EAST AND AFRICAN AFFAIRS BUREAU DEPUTY DIRECTOR GENERAL MURATA COMMENTED DURING CALL BY EMBOFF AT FONOFF DECEMBER 16. PRIME MINISTER MIKI "KNOWS BASICS" OF POLICY TOWARD AREA AND WILL BE TOO PREOCCUPIED WITH PROBLEMS OF PARTY REFORM TO MAKE MANY CHANGES, EVEN IF HE WANTED TO. OVER LONGER TERM, HOWEVER, MURATA WORRIED THAT MIKI'S PROCLIVITY FOR RHETORIC PLUS THE DESIRE TO PRESERVE HIS REPUTATION WITH ARABS AND THIRD WORLD MIGHT COMBINE TO GIVE JAPANESE POLICY IN THE MIDDLE EAST A MORE PRO-ARAB SET THAN BEFORE.

2. NEW FOREIGN MINISTER MIYAZAWA IS BRILLIANT AND WELL VERSED, MURATA CONTINUED, BUT HAS A TENDENCY TO TAKE PREMATURE POSITIONS ON POPULAR ISSUES IN HOPES OF LOOKING GOOD LATER ON. THIS IS A COMMON FAULT AMONG INTELLECTUALS IN JAPAN, MURATA SMILED, AND ONE WHICH CAUSES PROBLEMS FOR BUREAUCRATS LIKE HIMSELF, WHO PREFER TO REACT TO EVENTS. HE COULD NOT SAY, HOWEVER, WHAT EFFECT THIS TENDENCY MIGHT HAVE ON GOJ POLICY TOWARD THE ARABS.

3. MURATA EXPECTS PRESSURE FROM ARABS ON POLITICAL ISSUES TO INCREASE SHARPLY OVER NEAR TERM. VISITING SAUDI DEPONMIN FOR FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION SHEIKH IBRAHIM AL MOHAMMED AL
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SULTAN TOLD MURATA AT LUNCH DECEMBER 16 THAT GOJ ABSTENTIONS ON PLO

RESOLUTIONS IN UNGA HAD COST JAPAN "ALMOST ALL" OF ITS STANDING WITH ARABS IN GENERAL AND SAUDI GOVERNMENT IN PARTICULAR. HE WARNED THAT JAPAN WOULD NEED TO TAKE ACTION TO RECOVER LOST GROUND.

4. CONJECTURING ON WAYS IN WHICH JAPAN MIGHT BE PRESSURED, MURATA SAID HE GUESSED THAT PALESTINIAN GOVERNMENT IN EXILE WOULD BE PROCLAIMED IN JANUARY AND THAT GOJ WOULD BE ASKED FOR PROMPT RECOGNITION. BEING FOR OBVIOUS REASONS MUCH MORE SENSITIVE THAN US TO ARAB PERSUASION, GOJ WOULD NOT BE ABLE SIMPLY TO "SIT TIGHT", HE CONCLUDED.

5. COMMENT: WE CAN ALWAYS COUNT ON MURATA FOR FRESH, CANDID, AND OFTEN UNORTHODOX VIEWS ON THE TOPICS FOR WHICH HE IS RESPONSIBLE. HE STRESSED, OF COURSE, THAT HIS IDEAS ON THE ISSUES DISCUSSED ABOVE WERE HIS OWN AND WE TAKE HIM AT HIS WORD. NEVERTHELESS, HE IS BRIGHT, INCREASINGLY KNOWLEDGEABLE, AND WELL PLACED TO MEASURE GOJ VIEWS ON HIS AREA.
HODGSON

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FOREIGN POLICY POSITION, RESOLUTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 17 DEC 1974
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ElyME
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974TOKYO16406
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740366-0727
From: TOKYO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19741227/aaaaaxgc.tel
Line Count: 80
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ElyME
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 31 JUL 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <31 JUL 2002 by worrelsw>; APPROVED <24 MAR 2003 by ElyME>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MIKI GOVERNMENT AND MIDDLE EAST POLICY
TAGS: PFOR, JA, XF, SA, PLO
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005